

CHAPTER VI

What All Children Need in Order to Have Self-Esteem

1. I have been describing marital dysfunction as it affects the parenting of at least one child in a family, the child who becomes an Identified Patient.
 - a. If the mates have low self-esteem and little trust in each other, they will expect their child to enhance their self-esteem, to be an extension of themselves, and to serve crucial pain-relieving functions in the marital relationship.
 - b. But this sounds entirely too one-sided, as though a child has no choice but to accept the role his parents are asking him to play, or as though children are simply blank sheets upon which their parents write.
 - Children are not just blank sheets. They come into the world with distinct constitutional differences. (Simply in terms of “body reactivity,” newborn infants are markedly different.) They also come into the world as either biological males or biological females.
 - Yet all children come into the world helpless. Whatever they require for survival must be given to them or taught to them. No child comes into this world with a blueprint of what he shall do and be. This can only come from the people with whom he lives, and whom I call survival figures for this reason.

2. From birth, for example, a child needs to be physically comfortable. He needs to be fed and warm so that the transition from womb to home is as smooth as possible.
3. From birth, a child also needs continuity in relationships.
 - a. When food and warmth come, he needs to have the same person bringing them, touching him, and talking to him.
 - b. He needs to have the same human voice and touch introduce him to the existence and predictability of one "other."
 - c. Even when he is fed and warm, he learns to require the physical presence of mother; he learns to require relationship *per se*.
4. A child needs to learn how to influence and predict the responses of others.
 - a. As he learns how to differentiate mother from all others, he also learns to develop different mother-influencing responses.
 - When he cries, food, warmth, and body contact usually come. Yet sometimes they don't come.
 - Some special kinds of cries work better than others at bringing mother.
 - Smiles bring extra-special treatment from mother.
 - b. When he learns to include father as a survival figure, he will also develop special father-influencing responses.
5. A child needs to learn how to structure the world.
 - a. With the help of language, he learns how to differentiate and classify beyond the world of self, father, and mother. He learns to classify cats and dogs, adults and children, males and females, family and not-family.
 - b. From his parents he learns not only how to classify but how to evaluate and predict. He learns to differentiate

between “good” and “bad” feelings, good and bad behavior, etc.

6. A child needs to esteem himself in two areas: as a masterful person and as a sexual person.* He will develop esteem about himself as a masterful person (a person able to do for himself) if at least one parent validates his developmental growth.
 - a. A parent validates this growth when he (or she):
 - Notes the existence of growth.
 - Communicates verbally or non-verbally that he notices.
 - Gives the child increased opportunity to manifest and exercise the new abilities emerging from growth.
 - b. As the child grows and learns, he becomes increasingly able to do more things for himself, to take care of himself.
 - He can feed himself, go to the toilet by himself, tie his own shoes, anticipate and avoid dangerous objects; in other words, he can handle his own body in relation to the environment and he can manipulate objects.
 - Mastery grows to include the ability to make decisions, to reason, to create, to form and maintain relationships, to time needs in relation to reality, to plan ahead, to tolerate failure and disappointment.
 - c. To validate a child’s mastery, parents must be able to recognize when a developmental stage has been reached and so appropriately time the validation.
 - They must not expect the child to be five when he is eight, or eight when he is five.

*I have chosen to separate esteem as a masterful person from esteem as a sexual person for two reasons. First, there are certain abilities and activities which are not necessarily linked with a person’s sex. Both males and females learn to work, think, read, problem-solve, experiment. (Of course, because these capacities are shared, they also serve to enrich male-female relationships.) Second, I have noted how some people can have esteem in one area of identity and not in the other. Adults may be able to relate sexually to the other sex but be unable to master themselves or the environment, and vice versa.

- In other words, for validation to be validation, it must fit the needs, abilities, and readiness of the child. And the acknowledgement of this validation must be clear, direct, and specific.
- d. Parental validation does not imply uncritical approval of everything a child wishes to do. Parents are the socializers; they must teach the child that he is not the center of their world or of the world at large.
- He must learn how to fit in with the requirements of family living, how to balance his needs with those of others, how to fit into the demands of the culture.
 - He needs to develop skills for coping with and balancing the requirements of *you, me* and *the context*, at this point in time, under these circumstances.
 - He may scream and complain at restrictions or rules, but accepting restrictions and learning rules is part of growing up. "Restrictions" and "validation" are not opposing terms.
 - Nor does parental validation mean intense, over-solicitous attention to a child's every need. Parents are people, too. Johnny may be ready to walk, with mother's encouragement, but mother, at the moment, may be busy at the stove.
 - Parental validation is most effective when it is administered in a relatively matter-of-fact way.
- e. If a parent does not validate a child's ability, or inappropriately times his validation, the child has trouble integrating the ability. It remains a fragmented aspect of the "unimportant me" or the "inadequate me" or the "secret me." Parents may:
- Fail to see abilities when they are obvious, or give no opportunity for their expression, or show no approval or disapproval when the child manifests them.
 - See abilities prematurely and anxiously urge their expression.
 - See abilities incorrectly (abilities which are simply not there) and anxiously urge their expression.
 - See abilities but discourage and punish their expression.
- f. If, when one parent validates a child's abilities, the other parent contradicts the validation, the child's learning

will be more difficult and he will manifest what he knows in a more inconsistent way.

- One parent may expect much from the child, the other parent, little.
- So a family therapist must be alert to how *both* parents go about validating each ability in a child.

- g. If parents do not validate an ability (if they do not see it, or if they punish it), the child will still continue to grow, since all life is geared toward continuous growth.

However:

- He may not allow himself to manifest the ability.
- He may manifest it secretly.
- He may manifest it in a distorted or disguised fashion.
- In any case, the ability will not contribute to his self-esteem.

7. A child will develop esteem about himself as a sexual person only if both parents validate his sexuality.

- a. He must identify with his own sex, yet that very identification must include an acceptance of the other sex.

- Males validate females as females, females validate males as males.
- Identification, in this sense, is a two-sided affair: "I am a male in relation to females. It is good to be a male because of what females are."

- b. Sexual identification is the result of a three-person learning system. Parents validate a child's sexuality by how they treat him as a small sexual person. But they mainly validate it by serving as models of a functional, gratifying male-female relationship.

- The context for learning to esteem one's sexuality can be diagrammed like this:

Father (big male) ————— Mother (big female)

A

B

C

child (little male)

- A and C are both interactions. B represents the demonstration by husband and wife (as observed by the boy) of adult male-female relations. The demonstration carries the greater weight. (Note that I specify that the child is a little male and his parents are a big male and a big female.)
- c. Many people, when they think of families, think of them merely as small groups made up of individuals performing similar or interchangeable role-functions.
- Family members are not sexless, ageless bodies interacting. They are adult males and females interacting with little males and females.
 - The whole world is made up of males and females. The most psychologically influential roles people play are sex-linked roles. Males are somebody's son, somebody's brother, somebody's boyfriend, somebody's husband, somebody's father, etc. Females are somebody's daughter, etc.
 - Males and females also fill roles which are not sex-linked, such as somebody's boss, somebody's teacher. But usually the sex of that boss or teacher carries special meaning derived from earlier relationships which were sex-linked.
- d. If a child needs both sex models, what happens if a boy's father dies when he is born and his mother doesn't remarry? Does this mean that the boy will not develop an esteem about himself as a male person?
- No, because children are ingenious at creating from the wider environment whatever is missing in family life. They use uncles, grandfathers, older brothers, neighbors, teachers, any available older male.
 - Even children in orphanages make models out of older boys and girls, or out of the housemother and the janitor.
 - Children will also make up a picture of what father was like from all the bits and pieces of data about father which they can receive from mother, grandmother, grandfather, etc.
 - The child will be able to use male models if he receives a message from mother that males are valuable. If he receives a message that males are not valuable and that it hurts mother when he reaches out for models, then he will use available models covertly and in a distorted way.

8. When the parents are not able to validate each other as sexual people, they will not be able to validate the child as a sexual person either.
 - a. Overt or covert disparagement will be going on between them and they will not provide models of a functional, gratifying, male-female relationship.
 - b. Moreover, if they are in conflict with each other they will be in conflict with the child, too. He will thus receive contradictory messages from them as to what he should do and be. He will be asked to go north and south at the same time.
 - c. Also, the parents will use the child as a pawn in the marital conflict. They will ask him to take sides in it. He will often find himself alternately disparaged by one and validated by the other.
 - d. All in all, he will be subjected to highly contradictory or discrepant experiences.

9. To illustrate, let us break down family interaction into a series of questions which a male child may be said to ask himself. The answers to these questions will form the basis for his sexual identification.
 - a. How does father (big male) treat mother (big female)?
 How does father treat me (little male)?
 How does father tell me to treat mother?
 How does mother (big female) treat father (big male)?
 How does mother treat me (little male)?
 How does mother tell me to treat father?
 - b. I will try to show, under each question, some very simple kinds of contradictions which may be presented to a child.

10. How does mother treat me?
 How does father treat me?
 - a. The child asks himself, in effect: How does mother (or father) react to the fact that I have genitals, that I manifest sexual feelings (in masturbation, nocturnal

emissions, erections, etc.), that I manifest sexuality toward others (in sex play, kissing, petting, and later on, in intercourse)? How does mother (or father) react to my interest in toys, my choice of clothes, my fights with boys?

- b. This the child can size up for himself because it is a matter of fairly direct experience.
 - He listens to what each says to him. Mother may tell him it is not natural to masturbate. Father may tell him there is no harm in it.
 - He listens to what each says about him to the other. Father may say, “Johnny is a weakling.” Mother may say, “He is not. He is just a boy.”
 - He notes how each behaves with him. Father may laugh when he “plays the field” with the girls. Mother may scold him for kissing *any* girl.
 - He notes how each reacts to the other’s behavior with him. Father may spank him when he stays out late. Mother may then scold father for being too strict.
 - He notes how each tells him to behave and how they themselves behave. Father may tell him not to steal, yet proudly cheat on his income tax. Mother may tell him not to lie, yet allow him to pass for twelve instead of fourteen when he goes to the movies.
- c. We must further keep in mind the fact that most children have the experience of being in the presence of both parents. Thus the opportunities for inconsistency are multiplied.

11. How do mother and father treat each other?

- a. Here the boy does not always have direct experience to go by.
 - How mother and father treat each other includes how they engage in sexual intercourse. This is usually not observed by the boy unless he has a chance to do “keyhole” research.*

*Adults, in our culture, do not openly demonstrate their sexuality before children, they just give occasional hints about it in jokes, embraces, kisses, etc. I am not recommending that they demonstrate it, either. But it is interesting to note how Eskimo children, for example, do not seem to suffer from frequent demonstrations of their parents’ sexuality.

— Even if the boy does chance to observe his parents in intercourse, he is not apt to understand the act in its adult meaning; to him it looks as if father is hurting mother. This would then be data about hurting rather than loving.

b. All that the child can observe directly is how his parents seem to get along with each other day by day. This, too, may be confusing.

— He may see them fight during the day, yet sleep in the same bed at night.

— He may hear them complain about “apron strings” or “balls and-chains,” yet see that each one grieves when the other is away.

— He may not see them fight openly, yet still observe from their behavior that they are tense and angry with one another.

— He may see them looking as though perennially hurt and not know what the hurt is about

c. To add to the possible confusion, he must integrate how they treat each other with how they treat him.

Consciously or unconsciously he must figure out:

— How come mother lets him know when she is hurt or sad, yet never lets on to father?

— How come father lets him have anything he wants, yet gripes whenever mother buys a new dress?

— How come mother urges him to be the toughest male on the block, yet insists that father keep his temper?

12. How does mother tell me to treat father?

How does father tell me to treat mother?

a. The child asks: Does mother disparage father, but tell me to treat him with respect? Does father beat up mother, but tell me to treat her with respect?

b. Many of these contradictory experiences could and would be explained in a functional family because the child could ask about them. The child could then learn that each experience has its own set of variables and is not necessarily linked to a similar one.

c. In a dysfunctional family, children get the impression that they may not ask questions. Questions might lead to

discussions of the marital relationship, and the mates are too pained about that to be able to discuss it openly.

13. When the child is thus left with unexplained contradictions, he will try to explain them to himself, often coming up with incomplete or incorrect conclusions.
 - a. In order to come to conclusions, he may dangerously distort or ruthlessly discard the facts of his experience.
 - b. For example, he may decide about the male-female relationship that:
 - If someone is “hurt,” the other “inflicts hurt.”
 - If someone is “weak,” the other is “strong.”
 - If someone “loses,” the other “wins.”
 - If someone is “good,” the other is “bad.”
 - c. Such overly simple black-and-white conclusions make integration of models especially difficult and seriously hamper the development of self-esteem. For example:
 - The boy can try to reject one parent (which we will call “north”) and choose the other parent (“south”). In so doing, he fails to include one sex as a model. Since he *cannot* unambivalently make such a choice, his rejection of one sex must remain incomplete.
 - He can try to reject both north and south. In so doing, he fails to include either sex as models. He refuses to integrate males in relation to females and females in relation to males, but such a refusal is also incomplete.
 - He can try to integrate what cannot be integrated by trying to go north and south at the same time. In so doing, he remains immobilized in his efforts to use either sex model.
 - d. A boy’s esteem about himself as a male will suffer most if his father looks the most hurt, disparaged, or depreciated in the marital relationship. A girl’s esteem will suffer if it is her mother who looks the most hurt.
 - This may be why we so often see sex-linked pathology in families where all the males or all the females manifest pain overtly in symptoms. (Of course, the other children in such families are also feeling pain,

even though their pain may not be labeled as pathological.)

- Since children readily tend to identify with the parent of the same sex (identify in the sense of seeing themselves as genitally like one and unlike the other), it is frightening to see the same-sex parent either inflicting hurt or being hurt.
- Of the two, however, the thought of being hurt is the more frightening. (“This will happen to me, too!”)
- In spite of other characteristics which stimulate the tendency to see oneself as more like one parent than the other, genital similarity carries with it similar destiny in relation to the other sex.

14. If parents consistently show that they consider their child a masterful, sexual person, and if they also demonstrate a gratifying, functional male-female relationship, the child acquires self-esteem and becomes increasingly independent of his parents.
 - a. When the time comes for him to partly leave home to attend school, he is confident about doing so (and encouraged to do so by his parents). He is able to profit from substitute parent figures (teachers) for much of his remaining education.
 - b. Also, as he grows in sexual maturity, he is able to turn away from the family, seek a sexual partner for himself, and set up his own independent life.
 - c. In choosing a partner, he does not (as Mary and Joe did) seek someone with whom he feels safe or who will bolster his self-esteem. Because he already esteems himself, he is relatively independent of what others think of him (including his mate). So he can take the individuality of his mate into account without requiring, for his own safety, that the mate be an extension of him.
 - d. In every way, self-esteem, independence and individual uniqueness go together.
15. The close relationship between parental validation, self-esteem, independence, and uniqueness shows up when

one observes how a dysfunctional person (an unvalidated child who is now an adult) still clings to his parents, or to substitute parent figures, or relates to his sexual partner as if that partner were, in fact, a parent.

- a. Such an adult remains in the parental home long after he is physically grown.
 - b. Or he continues to be closely involved in his parents' lives. He moves back in with them later in life. Or he allows them to move in with him. Or he lives around the corner from them and sees them so frequently that it is often difficult to distinguish between his home and theirs.
 - c. Or he leaves his parents but continues to seek validation from substitute parent-figures outside the home (from an employer, older friend, etc.). He may label one such figure a "mate" and marry her, but relate to her as to a parent.
16. Does this mean that when we see parents who have failed to validate their children we can assume they did not want their children to become independent of them? This is partly so, but is too simple a way to explain the complex motivations involved in dysfunctional parenting.
- a. Parents who fail to validate their children are usually to disappointed in their marital relationship and too involved in filling their own needs even to see their children as individuals, much less see their needs. They are themselves products of dysfunctional parenting.
 - b. Their failure to validate is more an act of omission than of commission. They desperately wish to be good parents.
 - c. Because dysfunctional parents see "parenting" as uninfluenced by their own pained marital relationship, they are unaware of the fact that what they build with one hand they tear down with the other.

CHAPTER VII

The Family Triangle A Brief Aside

1. We need to take some time out, before going on to the chapters on communication, to evaluate certain family behavior which seems to contradict the thesis that a child needs his parents to have a functional, gratifying relationship and will automatically thrive if they do have one.
 - a. Transcribed excerpts of early family therapy sessions show that:
 - When husband and wife start to argue, the I.P. intervenes and diverts their focus onto himself.
 - In the same way, when husband and wife start to get together amicably, the I. P. intervenes and diverts their focus onto himself.
 - b. Many psychologists have seen this behavior as emanating from a child's sexual wishes for the other-sex parent. This wish continually leads him to try to separate his parents while at the same time it leads him to bring them together, partly because he fears castration and partly because he needs them both.
2. My own interpretation is somewhat different. To begin with, I do not postulate sex as the basic drive of man. From what I

have observed, the sex drive is continually subordinated to and used for the purpose of enhancing self-esteem and defending against threats to self-esteem.

- a. It is true that two people who have high self-esteem, and who openly behave in accordance with their own uniqueness, will come out as sexually identified, masterful, creative people.
 - b. However, the need to feel esteem about the self is so important that adult mates will do without sexual satisfaction or fail to demand it in a vital relationship if sexual behavior or demands for it lead to threatened self-esteem. One sees this over and over again when counseling marital pairs.
 - c. The need for sexual satisfaction continues to exacerbate problems in the marital relationship, but the mates continue in the relationship nonetheless; the need to protect self-esteem, as demonstrated by such marital solutions, takes precedence over the sexual need.
3. I explain the I. P.'s behavior in therapy as follows:
- a. When the boy's parents argue, the boy fears that one or both of them may be destroyed in the process.
 - He does not want to lose either parent; he loves and needs them both.
 - He has learned that when he diverts their focus onto himself, his parents stop arguing.
 - b. When, in family therapy, the boy's parents start to get together amicably, he is presented with an entirely new situation.
 - A boy in a dysfunctional family has never had the experience of united parents. When they tried to appear united, he always knew that they were not. Now, when they might actually be taking their first steps toward amicability, he has no experience by which to evaluate their behavior.
 - Also, up to now his own needs have been met only through their needs. If his parents get together, they may ignore him altogether; he may be abandoned. He has never had the experience of being left out of the

marital relationship yet still assured of appropriate parenting.

- Although his present role as I.P. is a burdensome one, he knows no other family role and, like his parents, he fears change. Both he and his parents actively cooperate to keep family therapy parent-child focused.

- c. I have been repeatedly struck by how readily the I.P. drops his role as intervener once family therapy is under way. Once he is assured that arguments do not bring destruction and that marital amicability lightens parental demands on him, the I.P. actively helps the therapist help his parents *as mates*, while at the same time he tries to get his parents to recognize him as a separate individual with needs of his own. As a matter of fact, the I.P. is often very helpful as “assistant marital counselor.”

4. The question may still be asked, though: Why do we see over-developed father-daughter, mother-son relationships repeatedly showing up in dysfunctional families?

- a. Doesn't this prove that each child really parents; that he not only sets out to do so but, in a sense, succeeds? And that when he thinks he has succeeded, he manifests symptoms?
- b. Symptoms may, to some degree, originate from the Oedipal conflict. But my question is: How did this conflict come about?

5. I believe that the Oedipal development only becomes an Oedipal “conflict” when the individual is unable to integrate an appropriate picture of his own sex with a compatible picture of the other sex. Whether this happens or not depends on whether the parents are clear, direct and specific in relation to their different-ness and uniqueness.

- a. Children are born with the ability to express feelings about their sexuality toward anyone without guilt.
- b. But children are born into a world which imposes strict taboos on certain expressions and behavior in regard to

sexuality. The most important of these is the incest taboo, imposed to protect the child and to protect the adult sexual relationship.

- c. Children learn that the incest taboo exists when they express their feelings toward the other-sex parent and receive disapproval which induces guilt and fear, threatening their self-esteem.
6. But guilt and fear alone do not lead to a crippling Oedipal development.
 - a. Children in functional families receive clear, consistent admonishments that neither parent is a suitable object for the child's increasingly strong sexual feelings.
 - b. The child of such parents will be "conflicted" by such admonishments to the same degree that he is conflicted by any restraints put on his endless self-wishes.
 - c. The child's sexual feelings, *per se*, are not frowned on. He is assured that such feelings only require expression elsewhere.
 7. The incest taboo becomes something to be strongly conflicted about when both parents enforce it inconsistently and one parent positively encourages the child to try and break it.
 - a. In dysfunctional families, the other-sex parent fosters incestuous feelings by overtly expressed expectations and demands.
 - b. The same-sex parent fosters guilt about such feelings when he fails to intervene with the mate and with the child, yet at the same time disparages and withdraws from the child, causing the child to drift all the more toward the seductive parent.
 - c. The incest taboo, by itself, causes only minor conflict in the child. It is the parents' inconsistency about the taboo which both stimulates sexual feelings and increases guilt.

8. As I said before, in any triangle, all three members can have fears about being left out.
 - a. In my opinion there is no such thing as a relationship between three people. There are only shifting two-person relationships with the third member in the role of observer.
 - b. In a family triangle, the wife fears that her husband will be less interested in her, the husband fears that his wife will be less interested in him, and the child (when he becomes aware of his father) fears that he will not be the center of his parents' world.
 - c. By age two a child is definitely aware of his father as a person who is gone all day but who comes home at night, demanding attention from his wife.
 - Children of both sexes respond to the arrival of father with interest and fear. They must now figure out where they fit with two significant others.
 - A child tries to solve the dilemma either by running from one to the other, or by getting both, as a unit, to concentrate on him.

9. In the functional family triangle, the mates are confident about their own marital relationship and so are able, in an unthreatened way, to handle the child's fears of being left out.
 - a. Mother is able to allow the child a father-child relationship.
 - b. Father is able to allow the child a mother-child relationship.
 - c. Yet both mates make it clear to the child that he can never be included in their relationship as mates.

10. In the dysfunctional family triangle, the mates are not confident about their own marital relationship.
 - a. They already feel left out with each other. (As a matter of fact, one of the principles from which all members in

such a family operate is: There is not enough to go around. Who is going to get what is available?) Both mates look to the child to satisfy their unmet needs in the marital relationship.

- Because they are disappointed in each other and engaged in a marital war, they both ask the child to side with them. (This means siding against the other parent.)
- The mother, in her efforts to turn the boy child into an ally and ersatz mate, also woos him seductively, offering him an added inducement. (A father will do the same with his daughter.)
- The boy, being a sexual person, will respond to his mother's affection in kind. He will do so without any feeling of guilt at first; his mother's behavior will simply look like approval behavior: "She likes me."
- The father reacts to the close mother-son relationship with disapproval, disparagement and withdrawal. The boy receives the message: "Father doesn't like me."
- And when the boy notes how mother disparages her mate at the same time that she approves of him, he receives another message: "Mother likes me better than father."
- The boy loves and needs both of his parents. He can only feel conflicted by his mother's love: "Mother's love loses me Father."

b. Incest terrors show themselves, in reality, as learned responses to an actual environment.

- Mother does show jealousy toward Johnny when Johnny seems to side with father.
- Father does show jealousy toward Johnny when mother invites Johnny to become ersatz mate and ally.
- Yet both parents allow Johnny to think that he is essential to their marital relationship. When he tries to avoid taking sides or avoid being used in their sex war, they both continue to involve him.
- As for Johnny's castration fears, he has good reason to worry about losing his penis. Since females don't have one, the penis does come to look like something that could be taken away by an angry person. (And, more often than not, he receives just such threats, overtly or covertly, from either or both parents.)

11. I should add that although a son may appear closer to and allied with his mother (as a daughter may appear closer to and allied with her father) such an alliance is illusory.
 - a. Such a relationship may be interpreted by mother and father as siding, but it is not siding as far as the boy is concerned.
 - b. Children cannot unambivalently side with either parent.
 - c. Children long for and need an accepted relationship with each parent. This is one of the ways their mastery and sexuality gets validated.
 - d. Another way is by example. A mother does not have to engage in sexual intercourse or in seductiveness with her boy in order to assure him of his worth as a male. She indirectly validates him by engaging in intercourse with her husband and by openly enjoying and approving of her husband as a male person. She also validates her son by letting him know that she approves of his sexuality and of his eventually seeking a sexual partner of his own.
12. Because both mates in a dysfunctional family are particularly sensitive about being left out, the child does, in effect, end up by losing one parent unless he is able to reassure both parents by walking the precarious tightrope between them.
 - a. The son ends up with a distant relationship to father.
 - b. The daughter ends up with a distant relationship to mother.
13. A child who becomes an Identified Patient in a dysfunctional family is saddled with far more than incestuous desires and castration fears.
 - a. He is saddled with the burden of believing that he actually does hold his parents together. He learns that he can unite them in some fashion at least by getting them to focus on him.

- This happens naturally, as he ricochets from one parent's extension-of-self wishes to the other's.
 - This also happens as he tries to get validation of himself as an individual with needs of his own and these efforts are perceived as rebellious, unloving behavior.
 - Since he cannot please both of his parents and also himself, he manifests increasingly contradictory and extravagant behavior.
 - Such bad, different, crazy or sick behavior leads his parents to unite all the more in an intense focus on him.
- b. But such a way of uniting his parents does not really relieve marital pain, nor does it ever really include the I. P. in the marital relationship. He suffers from a burdensome delusion that he is an "insider." (In a functional family, such a delusion would, as a matter of course, be dispelled.)
- The I. P. does not stop his parents' pain. All he does is divert the expression of it onto himself.
 - He is not a genuine part of the marital relationship. That relationship is a closed system, physically and psychologically. The child is littler than his parents are, he doesn't know what they know, he cannot do what they can do. In no way can he relate to either of them as they can relate to each other. He is not their equal, sexually or otherwise.
 - Even as an "outsider," the I. P. lacks experience or judgment as to what the pain is all about, so that whatever he does to relieve pain is bound to be unfitting and unsuccessful. (For example, adults may manifest their pain in different ways. Father may show his pain by bullying behavior with mother. Mother may show her pain by crying. To a child, mother thus looks more pained in the marital relationship than father does. How can he fully understand their mutual pain when he sees his parents through such a simple lens?)
- c. Even though the I. P. cannot relieve pain, his parents allow him to believe that he can, and that he is essential to the marital relationship. So he suffers from another burdensome delusion: that he is omnipotent.
- Why would they both respond so intently to him if he were not very important?

- Why would they both ask him to side with them if he were not equal to them?
 - Why would they both rely on him to validate their self-esteem and represent the family in the community if he were not all-powerful.
 - Why would they rely on him to hold their marital relationship together if he were not a part of it?
 - Who but an omnipotent, omniscient King would be treated in such ways?
- d. The I. P. is, in effect, burdened with the responsibility of living for his parents. His own needs are ignored and he has never discovered a way of getting them attended to.
- As a result, he swings from omnipotence to helplessness, from grandiosity to self-abnegation.
 - He develops little ability to predict in relationships.
 - And, because his needs remain unvalidated, he is distrustful of others, yet dependent to a crippling degree on what others think of him.